

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 839

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONEUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 5979

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN

SUBJ: GOP REACTION TO INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: GOP CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN STRICT OFFICIAL SILENCE ON RECENT INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS AND PRESS HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO STRESS THAT THESE EVENTS ARE AN INTERNAL MATTER, THAT GOP FAVORS POLITICAL STABILITY IN INDIA, AND THAT IT REMAINS COMMITTED TO NORMALIZATION PROCESS. MFA OFFICIAL SEEMED MUCH MORE RELAXED THAN EARLIER ABOUT POTENTIAL INDIAN DIVERSIONARY MOVE. HE THOUGHT PROSPECTS FOR RESUMPTION OF INDO-PAK NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN SET BACK BY EVENTS. GOP APPEARS TO VIEW JUNE 26 DEVELOPMENTS AS IRREVERSIBLE AND TO HOLD THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC POLITY WILL NOT BE THE SAME AGAIN. UNTIL MATTERS BECOME CLEARER IN INDIA GOP IS UNLIKELY TO DEVELOP ANY FIRM IDEAS ABOUT WHAT THIS CHANGE MAY MEAN FOR PAKISTAN. THEIR PRESENT STANCE IS THE MOST SENSIBLE AND HELPFUL THEY CAN ADOPT AND WE HAVE QUIETLY ENCOURAGED IT. END
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SUMMARY.

1. GOP CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN STRICT OFFICIAL SILENCE ON GOI PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA. INSTRUCTIONS HAVE GONE OUT TO THE PRESS TO STRESS THAT THESE EVENTS ARE AN INTERNAL MATTER ON WHICH PAKISTAN DOES NOT INTEND TO COMMENT, THAT GOP FAVORS POLITICAL STABILITY IN INDIA, AND THAT IT REMAINS COMMITTED TO NORMALIZATION PROCESS. MEDIA HAVE ALSO BEEN ADVISED TO TAKE A CAUTIOUS, CIRCUMSPECT LINE WHEN COMMENTING ON DEVELOPMENTS WHEN THEY FEEL THEY MUST COMMENT AT ALL. TO UNDERSCORE IMPORTANCE GOP ATTACHES TO THIS NON-PROVOCATIVE, HANDS-OFF APPROACH, EDITORS WERE BRIEFED BY BOTH FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI AND INFORMATION SECRETARY NASIM AHMED, AN UNUSUAL PROCEDURE, WHEN GIVEN THE LINE JUNE 27.

2. IN MEETING WITH MISSION OFFICERS JUNE 28, DIRECTOR GENERAL (SOUTH ASIA) HAYAT MEHDI ALSO STRESSED "NO OFFICIAL COMMENT" THEME. HE SAID THAT WERE INDIAN SIDE TO MAKE ANY COMMENTS INVOLVING PAKISTAN, GOP WOULD NOT REACT WITHOUT THE MOST CAREFUL CONSIDERATION AND THAT DECISION AS TO HOW TO PROCEED WOULD BE TAKEN ONLY AT THE VERY HIGHEST LEVEL, I.E., BY BHUTTO. OBVIOUSLY MUCH MORE RELAXED THAN HE HAD BEEN EARLIER REGARDING PAK CONCERN ABOUT POTENTIAL INDIAN DIVERSIONARY MOVES DIRECTED AGAINST THEM, MEHDI OBSERVED THAT GOP WAS "NOT OBLIVIOUS" TO POSSIBILITY BUT SAID HE DOUBTED THAT MRS. GANDHI WOULD WANT TO UNDERTAKE SUCH ACTION NOW GIVEN STATE OF PLAY AT HOME. HE THOUGHT DANGER WOULD BE GREATER IN LONGER RUN.

3. BILATERAL RELATIONS. MEHDI SAID HE THOUGHT THE PROSPECTS FOR A RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DEADLOCKED CIVIL AIR ISSUE AND OTHER MATTERS RAISED AT THE LAST INDO-PAK ROUND HAD BEEN SET BACK BY INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS. HE ASSERTED THAT THE GOI WOULD BE TOO PREOCCUPIED BY DOMESTIC PROBLEMS TO GIVE MUCH CONSIDERATION TO THESE MATTERS AND THAT, IN ANY EVENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE INDIANS WOULD NOT WANT TO BE SEEN NEGOTIATING WITH THE PAKS, AND PRESUMABLY MAKING SOME CONCESSIONS TO THEM, GIVEN THE PRESENT INDIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. (AN EXCEPTION TO THIS APPEARS TO BE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAY DECISION TO WORK OUT THE DISPUTE OVER THE SALAL DAM. THE INDIAN INDUS WATER COMMISSIONER IS NOW IN ISLAMABAD FOR TECMIKWL TALKS.)

4. IN MAKING HIS COMENTS, MEHDI READILY ADMITTED GREAT UNCERTAINTY ON HIS PART ABOUT WHAT SHAPE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD TAKE IN INDIA. THIS INABILITY TO ASSESS THESE UNPRECEDENTED EVENTS IS WIDELY SHARED BOTH IN MFA AND ELSEWHERE IN PAKISTAN. THE ONLY THING THAT SEEMS FAIRLYFNHRTAIN NOW TO THE GOP IS THAT THE DEVELOPMENTS OF JUNE 26 ARE IRREVERSIBLE (AS AGHA SHAHI TOLD THE CHARGE THE FOLLOWING DAY) AND THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC POLITY WILL NOT BE THE SAME AGAIN. SPECULATION IS WIDESPREAD, BUT UNTIL MATTERS BECOME CLEARER IN INDIA THE GOP IS UNLIKELY TO DEVELOP ANY FIRM IDEAS ABOUT WHAT THIS CHANGE MAY MEAN FOR PAKISTAN. SO FOR THE MOMENT THE PAKS ARE KEEPING OFFICIALLY MUM, SEEKING WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY CAN GET FROM US AND OTHERS, WATCHING THE SITUATION CAREFULLY, AND BEHAVING IN AS DETACHED A MANNER AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS CERTAINLY THE MOST SENSIBPZ AND HELPFUL STANCE THEY CAN ADOPT AND WE HAVE QUIETLY ENCOURAGED IT.

5. SEPTTEL FOLLOWS ON PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION.
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